

HEALTH

Preventing the Flu

The single best way to prevent the flu is to get vaccinated each fall, but good health habits and antiviral medications are other measures that can help protect against the flu.

How do flu vaccines work?

Both flu vaccines, the flu shot and the nasal-spray flu vaccine (LAIV) work in the same way; they cause antibodies to develop in the body, and these antibodies provide protection against influenza virus infection.

When should I get a flu vaccination?

Try to get vaccinated in October or November because flu activity in the United States generally peaks between late December and early March. You can still benefit from getting vaccinated after November, even if flu is present in your community. Vaccine should continue to be offered to unvaccinated people throughout the flu season as long as vaccine is still available. Once you get vaccinated, your body makes protective antibodies in about two weeks

People who should get vaccinated each year are:

People at high risk for complications from the flu:

- People 65 years and older;
- People who live in nursing homes and other long-term care facilities that house those with long-term illnesses;
- Adults and children 6 months and older with chronic heart or lung conditions, including asthma;
- Adults and children 6 months and older who needed regular medical care or were in a hospital during the previous year because of a metabolic disease (like diabetes), chronic kidney disease, or weakened immune system (including immune system problems caused by medicines or by infection with human immunodeficiency virus [HIV/AIDS]);
- Children 6 months to 18 years of age who are on long-term aspirin therapy. (Children given aspirin while they have influenza are at risk of Reye syndrome.);
- Women who will be pregnant during the influenza season;
- All children 6 to 23 months of age;
- People with any condition that can compromise respiratory function or the handling of respiratory secretions (that is, a condition that makes it hard to breathe or swallow, such as brain injury or disease, spinal cord injuries, seizure disorders, or other nerve or muscle disorders.)

Visit the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention at www.cdc.gov to learn more about flu immunization.

